

THE SMART INDIE

BASIC PUBLISHING PLAN

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INTRODUCTION

You've heard the stories, haven't you? Writers of every genre, every age, every style, many of whom have never been traditionally published, finding readers and sales and success in the world of indie publishing. You've heard enough to know you'd like to dip your toes into the world in independent publishing, but you have no idea where to start.

You're not alone.

I talk to both unpublished and traditionally published writers almost every day, and the best piece of advice I can give is this: just start.

Remember when you wanted to write a book. You sat at your computer with nothing but an idea and a dream. Then you stared at that blinking cursor for hours because *finishing a book* seemed overwhelming.

In the same way that you had to tackle that very first

book—one letter, one word, one sentence at a time, you can tackle becoming an indie author.

I'm here to help.

How to use this book

I've broken down the whole of indie publishing into five overarching areas: Story, Marketing/Platform, Art, Retailers/Metadata, and Tracking/Making Adjustments. Each component is necessary for a successful career, but you don't have to master each area all at once.

I recommend reading through this book in its entirety and then coming back to study each area more thoroughly. Once you've done that, you can apply the principles you've learned at your own pace.

For more resources, check out the Indie Resources page on my website (www.lacywilliams.net/indie-resources). I update it periodically. There you can find information to help you delve deeper into certain topics. You'll also see recommendations for editors, proofreaders, formatters, and more.

Don't think you have to do it all.

I'm a part of a mentorship-accountability-business growth group, and we have an annual retreat, where we all catch up on each other's businesses. At our most recent retreat, we did an activity where we created a list of strengths and weaknesses for ourselves. One of my biggest

takeaways from the activity was this: most people believe they should focus on their weakest areas to improve themselves and/or their results in business. The opposite is actually true.

You'll gain more productivity when you focus on your areas of strength. When you focus on your areas of weakness, you'll gain very little.

As you work to become an indie author, take some time to make a list of your strengths and weaknesses. For instance, are you a strong writer but bad with details? Consider hiring a manager or assistant to deal with the little stuff. That will give you more time to focus on producing new work. You'll create more and better work knowing that the small things are taken care of. Are you a super-plotter, a deeply detailed person who can see every tree but has trouble seeing the forest of the overall market and trends? Consider hiring a savvy marketing guru to create your overarching marketing plan. You can execute the details much better with a road map guiding where you want to go.

Spend more time on your strengths and consider trading services or contracting experts to help you in areas where you're weakest.

A note on business structure

Before you open accounts at any distributor/retailer sites (which we'll discuss later), you should consult with an accountant and/or tax attorney in your state. Find out what business structure fits your situation best: individual propri-

etor, LLC, S-Corp, or C-Corp. This varies in each state, but you want to have your business registered and a business tax id before you open any accounts. Check trademark listings and make sure the publisher name you want to use isn't already in use. Find out what you need to do to register for a business tax id. Having your business structure in place before you hit "publish" will save you time in the long run.

Are you ready? Let's get started.

ONE STORY

There's not enough room in this section to dive deep into how to best craft your story. Fortunately, there are already a lot of good books out there on how to write novels. At a minimum, I recommend you study these: *Plot & Structure* by James Scott Bell, *Writing Fiction for Dummies* by Randy Ingermanson, *The Story Equation* by Susan May Warren, *The 11 Secrets of Getting Published* by Mary DeMuth, and *Writing the Breakout Novel Workbook* by Donald Maass.

Perhaps you think your novel is already excellent. Maybe you're right, but if you're like many self-published novelists, you'd be wrong. You must only publish your best book. Never ever ever ever publish something that you know is mediocre or feels boring. Never publish something you've kept in your closet for a decade, at least not without serious revisions.

Publishing isn't easy. The market is saturated with

books. Some horrible, some good, some awesome. In order to stand out, your work must be exceptional.

If your work isn't exceptional, keep polishing until it is. (You'll find information about editing later in the chapter).

A note on genre

In fiction, genre is a synonym for category. Traditionally, bookstores and libraries have used genre to classify fiction books and to be able to direct readers to the type of books they want.

As an indie author, you have the freedom to publish the books you want to publish, regardless of whether they fit into traditional genres. While there is freedom here, you should consider your reader. How will they find your book, if it is not in one of the traditional genres they are accustomed to?

As an indie author, you also have the ability to publish in multiple genres. Some authors might write in romance and young adult. While this might seem fun and freeing, be aware that while some readers will read everything you write, no matter the genre, there are others that only read one genre. If you write in multiple genres, you will spend more time building multiple platforms and your books will not have total cross-over from your readership.

Series

It is very difficult to market a stand-alone book without a large budget. Of course, we're going to talk about marketing and budgets later in this book. At this point, consider whether your title could be a good fit in a series.

Romance, mystery, suspense, sci-fi, fantasy, historical are genres where series work well. There are some genres where series don't resonate with readers. Do some research by browsing Amazon.com or looking up favorite authors in your genre. Do they write in series?

Think about your book. Are there ways you could connect this book with another existing book or one you intend to write? Are there characters in this book who could continue into another book (main characters or secondary characters)? Is there something about your setting that might attract readers to a second book in the series?

Hooks

Traditional publishers use hooks to entice readers to try their authors, and you should too.

What is a hook? A hook is simply a trope or cliché or theme that readers recognize within your genre. A hook *resonates* with the reader. Many readers search for hooks when looking for new books to read.

In romance, a hook might be something like, "marriage of convenience" or "single dad" or "cowboy" or "beauty and the beast story" or... you get the idea. In mystery, a hook

might be something like, “crime procedural” or “on the run” or “amateur sleuth.” Whatever your genre, try searching for genre + tropes and see what lists pop up. Mine these for ideas.

We’re going to talk about writing blurbs in the chapter on Art, and folding hooks into your blurb is an excellent way to help readers find your book.

Your story probably encompasses more than one hook. That’s a good thing! If you don’t know what hooks are popular in your genre, do some research. Look in book blurbs and see what wording the author/publisher is using to identify the hooks. Look at reviews. How do readers identify the hooks? Visit Goodreads and see how readers are talking about the hooks.

If you still can’t identify hooks in your book, consider choosing one or more and weaving them into the story. Your readers will appreciate you for it.

Drafts & editing

As I said above, you only want to publish your best work. Never publish a first draft. Depending on how experienced you are, the level of editing you’ll need will vary.

Traditional publishing recognizes these different types of drafts/editing:

First draft: This is the author’s first attempt at completing a manuscript for this work. From blinking cursor to “the end,” whether a plotter or seat of the pants writer,

this is where the writer throws words onto the page without much editing.

Revisions: After completing a first draft, the writer then considers the manuscript as a whole and makes changes. These can be adding or deleting scenes or chapters, changing the order of action for timeline continuity, and adding or deleting characters. The writer should also take a pass through the manuscript to identify sentences that aren't working, duplicate words or weasel words, and weak or mis-used words. The writer should also ensure chapter endings are interesting, chapter beginnings are interesting, characters' dialects are appropriate, and setting details are consistent. A good resource is *Self-Editing for Fiction Writers* by Rennie Brown.

FOR A TRADITIONALLY-PUBLISHED AUTHOR, the following three levels of edits happen in-house. For an indie author, you'll hire one or more freelance editors for these tasks.

Content edit: In a content edit, the editor looks for high-level errors within the manuscript. Are the characters unlikeable? Is there a timeline issue? Is there true conflict present, and does the conflict make sense for the story? And much more. These high-level edits often result in rewrites, where the author adds or deletes scenes or chapters or moves scenes around within the manuscript. Depending on the experience of your critique group or a trusted beta reader, and *if you are an experienced writer with multiple*

completed, published works under your belt, you may be able to consider a critique an effective content edit. Do not skip this step to save time or money. If your story and characterization aren't strong, readers will reject your book.

Line edit: I cannot stress enough that an indie author should hire a freelance editor for both line edits and copyedits. This is an area where many writers are weak and where an experienced editor can greatly benefit your manuscript. At the line edit stage, an editor examines each sentence and paragraph in your manuscript and suggests changes for accuracy and style. A good editor knows your voice and can suggest alternate wording for sentences that are clunky or unclear.

Copyedit: A copyedit is simply a read-through of your manuscript to correct grammatical errors. Sometimes, a line edit and copyedit are combined into one stage for cost and expediency.

Proofread: Traditional publishing houses typically have two or more proofreaders do a final read of a manuscript to check for missing punctuation or other grammatical errors that other editors and the author have missed. This is a great practice for indie authors to copy. Typically, an author will have read his or her manuscript an average of ten times from draft to final production. When you've read your manuscript that many times, it's easy to miss small errors—they don't even register to your eye. In the same way, two different proofers will catch different errors within the manuscript.

I strongly recommend you hire freelancers for content

edits, line edits, copyedits, and proofreading. If you are on a tight production budget, consider trading work with another writer. If you're a good content editor, you might trade a content edit to another writer for a copyedit. If you are an expert proofreader, consider trading that skill.

Your story, your way

One of the major perks about going indie is being allowed to tell your story how you want to tell it. There is no arguing with an editor over how the story should unfold. You, the author, get to make the final choices.

However, with this power comes responsibility. If your story fails, if it doesn't resonate with readers, you have only yourself to blame. By working with a reputable editor (or a series of editors) or trading critiques with experienced writers, you can find out what's already working or what needs work in your manuscript. If you receive consistent feedback that an element of your story doesn't work, strongly consider changing that element. By hiring freelancers and working with people you can trust, you *can* create exceptional works of fiction.

Story Checklist

- Is your story part of a series? Write down the series name and number.
- What hooks are part of your story? Make a list.

- Write out your deadlines:

-first draft

-revisions

-content edit

-line edit

-copyedit

-proofread

- My book is ready for readers!

YOU CAN DOWNLOAD a complete SMART Indie Publishing Checklist here: <http://www.lacywilliams.net/indie-resources>

TWO

MARKETING & PLATFORM BUILDING

New indie authors are born every day. Something many of them don't know about marketing is this: you will pay to be noticed. There's no magic formula to creating a bestselling book or staying on the Top 100 lists at Amazon, only a lot of hard work and marketing dollars spent.

In traditional publishing, publishers gamble and put their biggest marketing dollars behind the books they think will be bestsellers. They choose authors with longevity and a track record of high sales and reader response.

The world is quite different for indie authors. You can start small, be smart, and gain readers one at a time, building your platform to the point that your die-hard readers will provide a sustainable income for you.

Do *not* spend yourself into debt. Don't put marketing expenses on credit. Start with a small budget and grow your marketing budget as your earnings increase.

One goal

For each marketing campaign you do, you should have one goal. Be specific. If your goal is "sell more books," you'll use different strategies than if your goal is "make more money." In the first, you'll consider a lower price point (in general, you will move more quantities of any product at a lower price) and posting on a wide array of ad sites. If your goal is to "make more money," you'll test prices until you discover what the market can bear. You'll probably write more books quickly to build your backlist.

These are only two examples. Other marketing goals might include building your email newsletter list, accumulating pre-orders on the next book, promoting audiobooks, and others.

Having only one goal will increase the effectiveness of your marketing. You won't waste dollars on techniques that don't apply to your goal, and you'll have a better chance of achieving your goal.

Always market with the reader in mind.

Two valuable resources about marketing in general are *The Tipping Point* by Malcom Gladwell and *Made to Stick* by Chip and Dan Heath.

When you write your book blurb (see the next chapter), a social media post, or your newsletter announcement for your next new release, consider the desires of your readers. What moves them? What words make them sit up and take

notice? What are themes that resonate with them? Make sure to show all of this in your marketing copy.

Each individual reader is unique. Kristine Kathryn Rusch's *Discoverability* has an informative chapter on reader types. Consider how you might reach those different types of readers with different marketing strategies.

Must-dos for every author

I never encourage authors to do marketing tasks they hate. If you hate something, chances are you'll procrastinate or give it only a half-effort, which doesn't help at all. If marketing is one of your weak areas, consider hiring out the tasks that you feel are non-negotiable. And know that there are ways to reach readers that don't require you to feel uncomfortable or as if you're wasting your time.

There are a few things I recommend every author do to grow your readership:

Have a basic website. Die-hard readers want an easy place to find out about your backlist (all the books you've published), find out about new releases, and sometimes find out more about you. You don't have to have something expensive. Simple and professional are musts.

Have a basic newsletter. Services like Mailchimp and Mad Mimi make it easy to communicate with your readers when you have a new release and to build reader connection. Some offer their services free up to a certain number of subscribers.

Put the newsletter sign up link on your

website, on social media, and at the back of every book you publish (indie or traditional).

When a reader finishes reading your book, he or she feels most warmly toward you. This is the moment to capture them and invite them into your inner circle (your newsletter list). Make sure you create an easy link (using bit.ly or another shortener service) and put it in all the places a reader will see it.

Optimize visibility for your books. An important part of marketing your books is positioning them correctly on retailer websites. In the previous chapter, we talked about hooks. That's part of it. In the chapter on Retailers/Metadata, we'll delve into the best ways to make your books visible on retailer websites.

Budget tactics

In the beginning, you might not have much of a marketing budget at all, but there are still some tactics you can use to grow your readership to the next level:

Email list trade. Ask other authors from your writers group or in your genre if they'll feature your next release or a freebie you have in their newsletter. In exchange, you feature their new release or freebie in your newsletter. You'll both gain new readers.

Multi-author promo. Consider joining a multi-author boxed set or Facebook promotion. If you're a newer author and can join a group of more experienced authors,

you can grow your readership by tapping into theirs. If you don't have any connections of authors doing this kind of promo, consider starting a boxed set yourself. You should have a written contract in place for any kind of promo that allows your work to be published in an anthology or collection. This is to protect both you and whoever is running the collection. Questions to ask before you join in a promo: how many marketing dollars are you expected to spend to promote the collection? Does the author group have a specific plan laid out to market the collection? How will readers find it? How big are the platforms of the participating authors?

Create a social media strategy. As of this writing, Facebook seems to be the strongest social media platform to connect with readers. Ensure your author page is set up and complete. Post interesting content and make sure to feature your books at regular intervals. A great resource here is Chris Syme's *Sell More Books with Less Social Media*. Don't post willy-nilly and don't overwhelm readers with "buy my book" posts.

Mid-level spender

If you have a small marketing budget, here are some strategies to consider:

Multi-author newsletter promotions. Visit the Resources page at my website (www.lacywilliams.net/indie-resources) to check out the ones I recommend. In this kind

of promo, a coordinator collects a group of authors who want to add readers to their newsletters. You might offer a free book download or other prize to entice readers to join. Not all services are reputable, so do your homework. The last thing you want is a lot of disgruntled people who weren't aware of what they were signing up for. The purpose of the promo should be clearly stated in promotional materials.

Bookbub ads. As of this writing, Bookbub allows authors to create ads on their newsletters and websites (seen on the bottom of Bookbub emails). These are pay-per-click ads—that means you'll pay depending on how many people see and interact with the ads. You can set different budgets within the ad interface. These ads can be used to target free, discount, full-price, and pre-order books. Depending on the purpose of your marketing, these ads can get a lot of eyes on your books.

Amazon ads. Through the Amazon Marketing Services program, authors can create Product Display and Sponsored Results ads. These can be used to get your book in front of many new readers. They are pay-per-click, but they can be expensive. Test and test again to make sure you have a positive return on investment (ROI, see chapter five).

Facebook ads. As of this writing, Facebook ads have lost some of their effectiveness due to the many authors and other marketers using them. You can still create ads with a positive ROI. Make sure to test, test, and test again to maximize your dollars spent. Monitor your ads consistently.

Bestseller tactics

Many authors dream of seeing their names on bestseller lists like those in *USA Today* and *The New York Times*. It takes a large following and a large budget to sell enough copies in one week to hit these lists. Other authors dream of having a consistent annual income that supports their family. As your platform grows, this is entirely possible. The tactics discussed here can benefit both kinds of authors.

With each release, readers' trust in your ability to deliver content that they love will grow. By using a long pre-order and utilizing your mailing list of raving fans, you can build momentum for your book launch up to and during release week.

Premium list-builder promos. There are a couple of services that can build you a targeted promotion via Facebook or other platform ads that drive readers to subscribe to your newsletter. These premium promotions usually require a buy in of at least \$500. Don't get suckered in to a service that won't deliver. Ask authors who've used these services who they recommend. Do your homework.

ARC distribution, blog tours & blitzes. One way to build early buzz for your book is by distributing Advance Reader Copies (ARCs). You can cultivate a list of influencers yourself or pay for a company to distribute ARCs to influential bloggers. As with other services, do your homework. Find out who other professional authors are using. Some companies offer blog tour or new release blitz

services that will post about your book on release week or during pre-order. As the internet evolves, the way readers interact can change, so make sure this is a viable promotional avenue before you pay for it.

Release-week promo. Bestselling authors spend large budgets on Facebook ads, Bookbub ads, Amazon ads, and even specialized ads like those in a Publisher's Weekly email blast.

Don't throw your money away

We'll talk about tracking revenue and expenses in the final chapter of this book. Don't skip that part. It's easy to turn on a Facebook ad and spend a whole lot of money with little return before you realize what's happened. Have a daily and weekly way to check your spending and return. You don't want to wake up and realize you've wasted money with no earnings to show for it.

Mailing list strategies

Your email list is an asset in and of itself. It can have the biggest impact of all your marketing tools.

There are different schools of thought when it comes to using your email list. Do you send out a chatty letter about what's going on in your life or focus solely on your books? Do you only send out an email blast when you have a new

release or keep in touch consistently? What is the right frequency, and what is the best content?

No one can answer these questions for you. You must think about *your reader*. How can you make them feel valued? How can you offer them a gift while letting them know about your new release? Here are some ideas to help you create an excellent newsletter plan:

*Join newsletters from popular, well-known authors and see what they do. How often do they send? What content do they use?

*Poll your readers. Even if all you have is a small list, this tactic works. What content do they want to see more of?

*What do you like to do? If writing is truly your passion, consider writing short stories you can give away as surprises to delight your readers.

*Look at your mailing list statistics. What percentage of readers are opening your emails? What percent are clicking? Is there some kind of content that they respond to better than others? Do more of that.

A list of recommended advertising sites

Please refer to Chapter Five. It is easy to spend hundreds of dollars for lackluster results. Indies talk. Keep abreast of current trends and what is working on author forums and groups. Here are some recommended sites that, as of publication of this book, work well for authors.

*Facebook ads

- *Amazon Marketing Services ads
- *Bookbub ads (<https://www.bookbub.com/partners>)
- *Bookbub featured ads (for free or discounted books)
- *Robin Reads (robinreads.com)
- *Book Basset (bookbasset.com)
- *One Hundred Free Books (<https://ohfb.com>)
- *Romance Reads (myromancereads.com)
- *ereadernewstoday (<http://ereadernewstoday.com/>)
- *Freebooksy (<https://www.freebooksy.com/>)

Marketing Checklist

- Basic website

registered to www.yourname.com - make it easy for readers to find you

includes the basics: author biography, book list (up-to-date!), contact information, awards and accolades

- Basic newsletter
- Newsletter link on your website, social media, back of books
- A plan for newsletter posting.
- Create a book-specific marketing campaign.
- List your goals for this book. Copies sold? Revenue?
- What ad sites might you use to promote this book?

- Can you cross-promote with other authors?

YOU CAN DOWNLOAD a complete SMART Indie Publishing Checklist here: <http://www.lacywilliams.net/indie-resources>

THREE

ART - PACKAGING YOUR BOOK FOR SUCCESS

There were over 625,000 ISBNs registered to self-published books in 2015.⁽¹⁾ This number only represents books and ebooks published with ISBNs (retailers do not require ISBNs, and many indie authors don't use them) and does not include traditionally published new releases.

While many of the indie titles are noticeable because of their terrible covers and editing, the market is still crowded with quality works. In order to stand out against so many successful indies and traditionally published books, at a minimum, your book must be packaged with the same quality as those professional books are. This includes three main areas: the book cover, the product information page or book blurb, and the interior formatting.

Book cover

Your book cover is the first thing a reader notices. This is true whether they see your book on your webpage or in search results on a retailer website. From a thumbnail size to full-screen, your book cover must be attractive and convey the book's genre, theme, and title, as well as your name or pseudonym.

Your cover must be professional. There is no leeway here. Readers can identify an amateur cover with one glance. If you're not a graphic design professional, hire someone. There is no room on retailer bestseller lists for amateur covers.

Your cover must be appropriate for your genre. Scan the traditionally published books and indie books by bestselling authors in your genre. How do they make you feel when you look at them? What style are they using? Is there one identifying characteristic that you can bring to your covers?

Your cover should convey your author brand. If you have books in a series, the covers should be similar in style and feel. Readers should be able to tell with one glance which books belong in which series.

Your covers should be fresh. If it's been more than two years, and especially if it's been longer than five, since your covers were released, take a hard look at them and decide whether they should be redone. Market trends change quickly. A popular cover two years ago might not make the grade now.

If you have an ebook version, paperback version and/or

audiobook version, all of the covers should have the same look and feel, even though they are slightly different in size (and shape, for audiobooks). An experienced cover designer can easily get you the covers you need for each version with minimal extra cost.

Check the Indie Resources page on my website (www.lacywilliams.net/indie-resources) for links to experienced, professional cover designers.

Product description page/book blurb

If your book cover passes the test and readers want more information, they look to the product description page. This is your book's specific page at any retailer. Some retailers offer more screen space, and you can list review accolades, information about yourself, and more. On some retailer sites, you're limited to only the book description. Use every sentence wisely.

Your book blurb tells what the book is about. It should convey your genre, appropriate hooks, character information, and enough about the plot to interest the reader without giving away any surprises or the ending.

Your book blurb should be professional. Let your copy-editor run through it to catch any grammatical or spelling mistakes. Look at what other professional authors are doing. Is there a pattern to their book blurb? How do they introduce the characters? How do they tell about the conflict without giving away too much of the plot?

Remember to write your book blurb with the reader in

mind. What are common things readers want to find out about books in your genre before they buy? Which power words really speak to them? What words or phrases turn them off? (Avoid those).

Invite the reader to take specific action. Suggested wording is something like, “click to get a free sample and start reading now.” You must ensure that the first pages of your book will wow the reader enough to make them want to buy.

If you’ve tried publishing with one blurb and you know people are viewing your book and not buying, consider changing it up. One of the nice things about indie publishing is that you have the freedom to change your product’s packaging anytime you want.

Interior formatting

When a reader opens your ebook file or cracks the spine of your paperback, you want them to be wowed.

Most readers are used to simple, clean formatting. For ebooks, professional indies use plain fonts (like Times New Roman) that are not embedded. Most e-readers and ebook apps allow readers to choose their preferred reading font and font size. Not only is using a simple font easier on you the author, but it’s also easier for your readers. And wouldn’t you hate to alienate readers by limiting them to one choice and not allowing any size scaling on their e-readers? Remember, think of the reader first.

There are programs that will do the formatting for you. Vellum is somewhat expensive and for Mac users only, but it's very close to one-click formatting for ebooks (as of this writing, they are beta-testing print book formatting). Scrivener is a writing program that produces clean, simple ebooks. Once you've completed formatting on one book, you can save your settings to use on future books, so you don't have to redo the work. There are several reputable companies that will format your ebooks and print books for you (see the resources list on my webpage for links). You can also code your ebooks by hand, but why waste time on something like that?

For print formatting, if you publish through CreateSpace, they have interior file templates that you can use to create the interior of your book. The templates are simple and clean. You can also use a program like InDesign to create prettier interiors.

For both ebooks and print books, the goal with your interior formatting is that readers won't notice a difference between your book and that of traditional publishers.

A note on front and back matter in ebooks: Front and back matter is simply the parts in an ebook or print book that come before and after the manuscript. For ebooks, this would include the table of contents (TOC), dedication, Dear Reader letter, and any other story notes or information about your other books.

As mentioned above, some retailers allow readers to download a sample of your book before purchasing. This

sample is limited to only a part of the book (usually 10-20%), and you want readers to have as much access to your writing as possible to entice them to buy. For this reason, I recommend putting acknowledgements, letters to the reader, and even the copyright at the back of your ebook. This allows readers who use the sample feature to read more of your book (and for you to hook them even more deeply).

(1) [HTTP://PUBLISHINGPERSPECTIVES.COM/2016/09/BOWKER-ISBN-SELF-PUBLISHED-US/](http://publishingperspectives.com/2016/09/bowker-isbn-self-published-us/)

Art Checklist

- Book cover
- Is your cover professional?
- Does your cover appropriately convey the story's genre and author brand?
- Does the cover fit the series brand (if in a series)?
- Book blurb/description
- Is your book blurb interesting? Does it hook the reader?
- Does it tell the story without giving away important story surprises?
- Book interior
- Is your book interior professional and clean?
- Are the non-story elements (front and back matter) placed strategically?

YOU CAN DOWNLOAD a complete SMART Indie
Publishing Checklist here:

<http://www.lacywilliams.net/indie-resources>

FOUR

RETAILERS & METADATA

As an indie author, you are responsible for getting your books in front of the most eyes possible. That means you need a strategy (see the chapter on marketing). Some retailers offer marketing perks and visibility if you choose to publish exclusively with them. You must weigh whether the increase in visibility on one retailer is more valuable than growing your readership across multiple retailers. Exclusivity also means you give up the right to publish your works for sale on your own website or on any new venues that could become available. Consider and weigh your options, including the length of exclusivity agreements, and talk to other authors. Estimate the sales you could make at other retailers or for yourself. What is the best choice for you?

Once you've made that choice, it's your job to get your book noticed on the retailer website. Let's talk specifics about the major retailers and distributors and how to get that done.

What is a retailer? A distributor?

A retailer is the website (or walk-in store) where readers can buy your books. In the U.S., there are five main retailers (discussed below) and a host of others. There are also some international retailers.

It can seem overwhelming to think about creating files and memorizing different requirements for five or more online stores. Distributors can help.

Sometimes called aggregators, a distributor is an author portal that doesn't sell ebooks or print books directly but pushes your books to retailer websites. They usually require a percentage off the gross revenue in order to use their service, but they offer convenience and sometimes opportunities for product placement on retailer websites. For example, Draft2Digital (see below) sometimes get their authors' books in special promotions on BarnesandNoble.com or iTunes. As with all services, read and understand the TOS.

In some cases, it is difficult or impossible for indie authors to get into some e-retailers without going through a distributor. Distributors can sometimes offer retailer placement opportunities that wouldn't be available to authors on an individual basis. Some concerns about using a distributor include not having complete control of metadata like you would if you publish to a retailer directly and not being able to use direct links to your other books on the retailer sites (i.e. you cannot use B&N links in an Apple .epub file, or your file will be rejected).

Authors should carefully consider what retailers and distributors fit with their overall publishing plans.

A note on pricing your books

As mentioned in the chapter on Marketing/Platform, you may have different pricing strategies for your books depending on your marketing goals. Ideally, for books that are not in a current marketing promotion, you want to maximize your profits by pricing your book at the highest rate the market can bear. This can take some testing. You might try a higher, lower and median price to see which (if any) affects sales. Amazon KDP (discussed below) has a pricing tool that can suggest a price for your book based on genre and length. Use it with a grain of salt as it sometimes returns inaccurate suggestions.

Each retailer and distributor pays royalties (payments made to authors for each book sold) at slightly different royalty rates. Some have tiers, where pricing your book at a certain price nets a higher or lower royalty. Authors should familiarize themselves with royalty rates and this should be a consideration in your pricing.

Don't undervalue your work. Readers are used to paying reasonably high prices for professionally written and published works. You've spent months or years working on your book and have expenses like editing and cover art as part of your production. Pricing your book competitively is a must.

Retailers

Amazon KDP (<http://kdp.amazon.com>) Through Amazon's KDP platform, indie authors can make their books available on Amazon.com and Amazon's international websites. KDP was one of the first to open to indie authors and boasts the largest number of authors who publish on this platform. Authors can publish on the KDP platform and have their ebooks (and now print books--in beta as of this writing) listed for sale on the Amazon.com (and Amazon's international) platforms. Royalty rates are subject to the terms and conditions in the agreement, and you must read and understand these before you upload anything to be published.

Most indie authors publish directly to KDP, even if they use a distributor to publish their books on other platforms. One of the major benefits of publishing directly is the ability to control the metadata (more on that later!) to ensure your book gets the right placement in the Amazon store. Also, there can be a lag time for updates to your book itself or the metadata when published through a distributor. When you publish directly with KDP, your changes typically show up in the Amazon store within forty-eight hours.

You can publish through KDP without being a part of the Select program. This is an optional marketing program, and you can enroll on a book-by-book basis (be careful to read and understand the Terms of Service (TOS) if you're considering putting a book in Select). A book is enrolled in Select for a ninety-day period and must be exclusive to

Amazon during that time. The Select program offers authors the choice of two promotion tools. You can't use both, so consider how to best maximize your marketing plans with the one you choose.

One choice is Kindle Countdown Deals, which allows you to discount your book for a limited period of time. While it's discounted, it will show up in the Countdown Deals page in the Amazon store, where some readers go to shop deals. When you choose this option, your book's Product page shows the discounted price and a small countdown timer, so the reader knows when this discount will end.

The second choice is Free Book Promotion, which allows you to set your book to free for five days (consecutive or non-consecutive) during the ninety-day promotional period. Free days can boost your visibility (especially when used in conjunction with a Bookbub ad or another promo).

Whether you choose Select or not, with Amazon you can publish your book immediately, or you can choose to allow pre-orders for up to ninety days before your book's publication date. As of this writing, you can select to publish your book at a 70% or a 35% royalty. The TOS explains the difference in royalty percentage and how it applies to your book. Some (not all) 70% options are not available unless you participate in the Select program.

Amazon does not allow you to price your book for free, except for the five-day promotion as part of the Select program. However, you'll notice many authors have books available for free on Amazon, and they stay that way for an

extended period of time as a first-in-series marketing promotion. This is done through price-matching. Publish your ebook for free on other platforms (Barnes & Noble, Apple, Kobo), and report the lower price to Amazon. While Amazon is not required to price match, in most cases they want to give their customers the best deal and will accommodate.

Keywords at Amazon

Of all the retailers, Amazon has the most robust search functionality and list of categories. As explained below, Amazon uses keyword phrases to allow authors to shelve their books (by categories) and ensure the books show up in search results. When uploading your ebook to KDP, pay close attention to your keywords. You may want to change up your keywords from time to time. Amazon changes their algorithms periodically. As a publisher, you should make changes to give your books the best visibility within those algorithms. If you notice a drop-off of sales and can't identify another reason, listen in on author groups. Amazon may have changed its algorithms and you may need to make adjustments.

Consider using romance tropes. Some readers really do search Amazon for tropes like “boy next door romance” or “marriage of convenience.”

Play with the Amazon search auto-fill function. In the Amazon.com search box, start typing something you think your readers are searching for (for example, “Christian romance”) Look at the auto-fill list that Amazon provides (the auto-fill function provides only words that readers are

actually searching for). Are there any useful keywords there?

Use keywords to place in narrow categories. While KDP allows you to select the bigger categories of “Romance” and “Women’s fiction,” you can also use keywords to get your books in the more narrow categories of “Romance > cowboys” or “Women’s fiction > coming of age.” Find out what keywords are used to reach these narrow categories here: <https://kdp.amazon.com/help?topicId=A200PDGPEIQX41>

Check out the BISAC codes. These codes are used by libraries and bookstores to categorize books. You might find some ideas here: <https://www.bisg.org/bisac-subject-codes>

ALTHOUGH AMAZON IS likely to be your largest source of ebook revenue, don’t ignore the other retailers. Some readers refuse to shop at Amazon or simply prefer their e-reader connected to a different retailer. Other retailers can become a nice source of additional income as your readership grows.

ITUNES

(<https://itunesconnect.apple.com>) Apple’s iPhone and iPad devices are well-known in the U.S. and internationally and these devices come pre-loaded with the iBooks app, a reading app with its own bookstore. Authors can access this retailer through Apple’s iTunesConnect platform. This plat-

form is slightly more difficult to upload to, as users must have access to a Mac computer to make uploads. If you aren't a Mac user, you have options: You can publish through a distributor (see below), or you can use a support service to do the upload for you. They charge a flat fee and upload your file to Apple. You can control price changes from the iTunes Connect web interface, but if you need to make changes to your source file (.epub book file), the support service must re-upload the file for you.

One other option: you can run an emulator on your Windows-based machine. This allows you to run a Mac operating system and Mac programs (like iTunes Producer) on your PC. If you aren't tech-savvy, this option won't be for you.

As of this writing, Apple does not have pricing/royalty tiers as some other retailers do. You receive a fixed percentage (royalty) of sales at any price. Additionally, you can set your books free without limitation. Apple allows pre-orders for up to one year before the book's release date, and many authors find this beneficial for building sales before release. Through iTunes Connect, you have access to Sales and Trends (reports) and Payment and Financial Reports (royalties paid). You'll also have the ability to authorize additional users to view or upload to your account. If you get stuck, contact Apple help through iTunes Connect. They are very helpful and will respond within forty-eight hours.

(<http://kobo.com/writinglife>) Kobo is a Toronto-based retailer and maintains a nice market share of ebook retail sales in Canada. Kobo is both the name of the bookstore and the e-reader device. Kobo operates with pricing/royalty tiers, as some other retailers do. Authors should read the TOS for details, so they can best plan their pricing strategies. Kobo also has a resources center called Learning Centre, as part of their platform. In it, you can find contact information for Kobo support, FAQs, tutorials, and a link to the Writing Life blog.

BARNES AND NOBLE

(<http://www.nookpress.com>) Through Barnes & Noble's Nookpress platform, authors can publish ebooks and printed books. Authors should be aware of what the print option actually provides. Study the TOS.

GOOGLE PLAY

(<https://play.google.com/books/publish/u/o/>) Google Play is a growing platform for Android users, and their app is also available on IOS. As of this writing, Google Play Partners has been closed to new authors as they've dealt with a proliferation of scammers. There are other ways to make your books available on this platform (see distributors below). Of note, for authors publishing direct with Google Play, GP does some weird things with promotional pricing.

Search an authors' group or ask a knowledgeable indie for direction before you hit "publish."

Distributors

Draft2Digital (www.draft2digital.com) has been around for several years. As of this writing, Draft2Digital allows authors to publish to these retailers: iBooks, BarnesandNoble.com, Kobo, Page Foundry, Scribd, Tolino, and Create-space (print books). Draft2Digital has special author links and can create metadata within your ebook file (front and back matter) before sending different versions to the different retailer websites.

Pronoun (<https://pronoun.com>) is a relatively new distributor run by the Macmillan big-five publishing house. As of this writing, Pronoun distributes to Amazon, BarnesandNoble.com, iTunes, Kobo, and Google Play. Get familiar with their TOS and royalty rates.

Smashwords (<http://www.smashwords.com>) was one of the first players in the self-publishing game, allowing authors to upload books to multiple platforms before indie publishing really took off. Many authors still use it for its familiarity, and Smashwords has made improvements to its platform, making it more accessible and easier to use. View the retailers and library channels served by visiting the Channel Manager within Smashwords.

There is usually some delay (a few days or more) for your book to show up at the retailer website once it has been approved by Smashwords. This also affects updates to your

book information (new cover art or a change in .epub file or metadata).

A caution: In the past, when Smashwords has added new retailers to its system, all books were automatically opted-in with no notice, not even after-the-fact, to authors. For authors who prefer to keep a tight rein on where their books are distributed, this can be frustrating. Authors can opt-out of new/additional retailers at the Channel Manager.

A note about your manuscript file: You can upload either a .doc file or an .epub. In order for your book to be approved for Premium status (to be eligible for “shipping” to retailers), it must pass Smashwords’ Meatgrinder. What is the Meatgrinder? An auto-vetter that tests your file for compatibility and basic errors. If you create clean .epub files, I recommend uploading that file type. Refer to Smashwords’ *Style Guide* (<https://www.smashwords.com/books/view/52>) for step-by-step instructions on how to create a clean file and get it approved.

Smashwords allows authors to create coupon codes, which can be used for promotional giveaways or can be used as advanced review copies. You can create a coupon for a dollar amount or a percentage (including 100%) off the cover price.

What about paperback books?

While it is possible to have a print run of hundreds or thousands of copies of your books, most indies choose to publish paperback or hardcover (sometimes) versions of their books

by using print-on-demand (POD) capabilities. There are two main players in this space, CreateSpace (<http://www.createspace.com>) and IngramSpark (<http://www.ingramspark.com>).

When considering print-on-demand publishing, you should take into account your overall goal. If you will hand-sell most of the print books yourself or expect to sell a few via online retailers to die hard print-only readers, you should consider taking the easier route and publishing with CreateSpace. They offer a WYSIWYG (what you see is what you get) online editor and have online proofing options. They offer easy-to-use book interior and wrap cover templates. If you find an error with your book after you've published it, you can re-publish a new version without any additional cost. IngramSpark does not offer a WYSIWYG element, and if you find an error after publication, there is a fee to upload a corrected file.

The big difference is if you hope to get your books in physical bookstores. If you anticipate selling a good quantity of your titles to bookstores and do in-store signings, consider publishing through IngramSpark. With IngramSpark, you can set your discount and make your books returnable. This makes your books appear professional to bookstores. CreateSpace stock is nonreturnable and does not allow for standard bookstore retail discounts. Your title might or might not say CreateSpace as the publisher (depending on whether you use the CreateSpace ISBN or your own). Additionally, for titles published with CreateSpace, bookstores must pay freight no matter how many titles they order. For titles

published through IngramSpark, bookstores pay no freight for orders of fifty or more titles.

Oh, and if you're worried about quality of print, know this: CreateSpace will often use Ingram's machines to produce. This means you'd be hard-pressed to tell the difference between the two companies' finished products.

Audiobooks

As of this writing, the main way indies get their audiobooks produced and available for sale on retail channels is via Amazon's ACX platform (<http://www.acx.com>). Through ACX, indies can find a narrator to record and produce their audiobook, produce it themselves (with a great voice and the right equipment), and get paid for copies sold. As of this writing, ACX distributes audiobooks to Audible.com, Amazon.com, and iTunes.

Authors should familiarize themselves with the TOS before going into production. ACX offers the option to pay your producer up-front or do a royalty-share production. In a royalty-share production, the narrator doesn't receive payment up front and royalties are split 50-50 throughout the term of the contract. Authors can also choose to distribute exclusively with ACX (higher royalty rate) or can choose non-exclusive distribution. ACX publishes audiobooks to Audible, Amazon and iTunes. If you plan to sell audiobooks to other channels (libraries or other audiobook retailers) or from your own website, you'll want non-exclusive distribution.

When you're searching for a narrator, ask professional authors for recommendations. Be aware that to hire a quality narrator, you'll pay for production up front, and the cost is usually at least a couple of hundred dollars per finished hour. You get what you pay for. Inexperienced narrators will bungle your production, have delays, and require many corrections to the finished product.

Do you need an ISBN?

Let's run through a quick ISBN FAQ.

What is an ISBN?

ISBN stands for International Standard Book Number. It is a ten- or thirteen-digit number that becomes a unique identifier for books. An ISBN is understood internationally. It can also be translated into barcodes, which allows vendors automation in their inventory and point-of-sale systems.

Do I need an ISBN to publish my ebook? Do I need an ISBN for each version?

No and no. The major players in digital publishing (KDP, Apple, Nookpress, and Kobo) do not require ISBNs.

Is an ISBN required to hit bestseller lists?

No. Although having an ISBN helps those compiling the lists match up your sales among multiple retailer sites, it isn't required.

Do I need an ISBN to publish my print-on-demand book?

Yes. An ISBN is needed for booksellers and libraries to locate your book through distributors, and both CreateSpace

and IngramSpark require you to use an ISBN to publish through their programs.

Can't I just use the ISBN provided by the print-on-demand retailer?

Yes. Authors should note that if you use the free ISBN from CreateSpace, distributors and retail sites will show "CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform" as the publisher/imprint for your paperback book.

Some authors still feel a stigma in the marketplace surrounding their self-published works and believe that using their own ISBN versus the retailer-purchased ISBN (making sure their publisher/imprint name is shown via distributors and retailers) shows a higher level of professionalism for these works.

Do I need more than one ISBN for my print versions?

If you have more than one print version (i.e. a paperback and a hardcover), you will need an ISBN for each edition. Some authors create a retail and a library edition (both paperbacks) and use separate ISBNs to differentiate.

Pros and cons

Some positives about using ISBNs: Creating your own publisher name and purchasing ISBNs through Bowker can represent a level of professionalism as an indie author. Having the ISBN makes it easier for publications like *USA Today* to track your sales, which becomes vital if you reach the threshold where hitting a list is a possibility.

Some negatives: Many readers don't understand ISBNs and will never know that you have one. Purchasing ISBNs is not cheap. Bowker gives a discount for bulk

buys, but if you don't have a large amount of cash to spend, you may be out of luck. (Do sign up for Bowker's newsletter—they occasionally run discounts on bulk purchases).

What is your long-term strategy?

When considering where to publish and whether to do ebook only or print and audiobook, indies must think of the long game. Where do you want to be in three years? In five? While there may be short-term benefits to building a large readership on one platform, traditional publishers have been burned by their reliance on one large retailer when it came to negotiating deals. And indies are in a particularly bad negotiating position, because we agree to abide by the terms of service as they are written. We have no leverage to negotiate a better contract.

Talk to other authors. Go to conferences. Meet retailer staff. Find out what strategies are working at different retailers and how authors are building their platforms at each one.

Once you've made decisions on retailers and distributors, you'll be ready to upload your books. But before you do, you'll need to have all of your metadata in place

Metadata

Metadata sounds technical, but the meaning is simple: it is "the information about the information." In action, metadata

provides the retailer platform with a way to categorize your book so that readers can find it.

Most retailer websites have "shelves," or categories, that readers can visit to browse top titles. These are mostly sorted by genre and sub-genre (some into very small niches). Some follow BISAC's category tree, so indies should familiarize themselves with it (and stay abreast of updates). This can be found at <http://bisg.org/page/fiction>.

Retailers also use search engine optimization to help readers find books. Retailers use this with varying degrees of success. On each retailer's site, the search engine and bots index the information you provide about your book. Only the programmers know the exact algorithms behind the search engines, but it's commonly believed that different components of metadata are weighted differently. Titles are weighted more heavily than product description. Product description is weighted more heavily than reviews (though that could be the other way around). That's why it is important to provide as much information about your titles as possible in all components of metadata.

Your title, subtitle (if any), and series name and number are vitally important. Work with a group to develop the best title for your book—you might be surprised that the title you love doesn't resonate with readers. Retailer websites offer visibility through series functionality. This means your series is linked and readers can find all the series books on one page (and in some cases, the retailer app/device will show series books to readers who finish any book in the series). You must be sure you're using the exact same series

information (“The Women of Valley View” is different from “Women of Valley View”) for each title.

The retailers allow you to choose two or more categories (shelves) to place your books. For example, your Christian romantic suspense might be categorized under “Romance > romantic suspense” and “Christian fiction > Suspense.” You want to choose categories that are relevant to your book and have a decent number of sales for the bestsellers. There are many discussions in author forums on how this is done. Also see the Indie Resources page at my website.

At Amazon’s KDP platform, you will also get to choose seven keyword phrases. Choose carefully and see notes above in the Amazon section for hints on choosing quality keywords.

Don’t get overwhelmed

Metadata may sound intimidating, but it shouldn’t be. Create an Excel file or a document within your Scrivener binder to keep track of the necessary items:

- Title
- Subtitle (if needed)
- Series name and number
- Book blurb
- Categories (“shelves” where this book should live)
- Search keywords (what would a reader search for to find this book)
- BISAC codes (optional)
- Editorial reviews (can be added to file later)

IF YOU KEEP all your metadata in one central place, you will always have it when you need it.

Retailer/Metadata Checklist

- Make a list of the retailers where this book will be for sale.
- Metadata for this book:
 - Title
 - Subtitle (if needed)
 - Series name and number
 - Book blurb
 - Categories ("shelves" where this book should live)
 - Search keywords (what would a reader search for to find this book)
 - BISAC codes (optional)
 - Editorial reviews (can be added to file later)

YOU CAN DOWNLOAD a complete SMART Indie Publishing Checklist here: <http://www.lacywilliams.net/indie-resources>

FIVE

TRACKING AND ADJUSTING

As an indie author, you *are* a publisher. You are a business-owner, an entrepreneur. And business-owners must know whether their business is profitable or not. Most small businesses don't show a profit in their first year. And that's okay. But you'd hate to get three or five years into your indie author career and still be showing a loss, wouldn't you?

The nature of publishing requires both work completed and an outlay of production costs (discussed later in this chapter) weeks or sometimes months and years before revenues begin to come in. With each book published, indie authors are taking a risk that it will resonate with readers, that it will *sell*. How can you know if these risks are paying off?

You track sales revenue. You track expenses.

Yes, there is some math involved. Creatives, don't quit on me now.

Availability of information

One thing that can be difficult for traditionally published authors is the delay in sales information. Typically, royalty statements are delivered three to six months or, in some cases, as much as a year after sales are recorded on the retailer side. Luckily, the indie sales data is available much faster. On some retailers, you can see live sales information (not always accurate). At a minimum, you can expect to see sales information on the next day. Distributors sometimes take slightly longer to record information.

All retailers and distributors have monthly royalty reports, sometimes available at month's close or sometimes within 30 days after the end of the month.

Having information available almost immediately allows indie authors the ability to judge whether marketing promotions are creating a positive return (more on that below), not working at all, or working but need some slight adjustment.

Let's look at some basic measurements to know whether the things you're doing in production and marketing are working.

Production expenses

It costs money to produce a book. Depending on your connections and needs, you may spend a little more or a little less than another indie author, but some reasonable expenses you should expect are:

- *cover art

*edits (multiple levels)

*interior formatting (ebook and/or print)

*narrator costs, if you're producing audiobooks

When considering production costs, the best measure to us is a breakeven analysis. What are your total production costs for Book A? How long does it take you to recoup those costs? Once you've earned back your production costs, your revenue becomes profit.

Marketing measurements

There are two main types of expenses in marketing: those that are directly tied to a promotion, and those that aren't. Your website hosting, newsletter hosting, and printed marketing materials probably fall into the latter category. Ad costs tied to a specific promotion are part of the former.

For promotion-specific expenses, Return on Investment (ROI) is one of the best measures of whether your marketing dollars are well-spent. This is a simple calculation: revenue (book sales) divided by cost (ex. ad dollars spent) expressed as a percentage or ratio.

In other words, were your revenues more or less than what you spent on the promotion? For this calculation, 1.0 is breaking even and anything higher than 1 represents 100+ percent return on investment. For example, if you spend \$300 on a Bookbub featured ad and you earn \$1000 in royalties from that promotion, your ROI is 3.33 (or 333%). This is a good return.

However, depending on *what* you're marketing, this

calculation can be difficult. For example, if you are marketing a free first-in-series book, your ROI on that particular book may be -2 (or negative two hundred percent), while ROI on the entire series is a high positive number. Or you may have a negative ROI on a promotion during one week, while sales for that book continue to come in for weeks to come, without any additional promotion, resulting in a short-term negative ROI but a long-term positive ROI.

In addition, in the beginning you may be happy with a break-even ROI, as your goal might be to increase your readership. So while you aren't making or losing any money, you are finding new readers by spending your marketing budget.

Why tracking matters

It can be very easy to spend a lot of money very quickly with no results. And that's not fun. The way to avoid that is to track your marketing dollars and results consistently—daily, if possible. That way, you can find out what's working and what's not. Once you know what is working, you can do more of that thing. Facebook ads creating a positive return on investment? Slowly increase your budget for those ads. A certain ad site isn't working for you? Don't book ads there again.

You must know what your goals are so you know whether you are achieving them. Positive ROI? Break-even ROI? A loss but with a specific purpose? Whatever your goal is, you must track sales and expenses to know whether you are meeting it.

Tracking services or DIY?

If you're like most indies, there's too much to do each day to spend hours pulling together daily sales information. Some indies do it. You can easily create an Excel spreadsheet that lists each book and each retailer and pull the number of sales and revenue per book.

Alternately, there are several services out there that provide a quick way to tabulate sales.

Booktrakr.com.

After an initial setup where you input your login information and passwords (encrypted, you can see their FAQs at <https://booktrakr.zendesk.com>), Booktrakr delivers a daily email that lists your sales for the previous day across all major retailers. At this time, audiobooks are not tracked. By logging in to the Booktrakr site, you can pull customized daily, weekly, monthly, annual, or multi-year reports. You can sort the reports by book, by retailer, by sales type, by country, and by much more. You can also create "shelves," so if you want to see how a certain series is performing versus all your books, you can do that with fewer clicks. You can input promotional dates, so you can see how your books are performing during and after a specific promotion. Depending on the level of service you choose, Booktrakr also pulls your historical sales ranking and reviews.

BookReport

(<https://www.getbookreport.com/>) is another tracking service that is specific to Amazon and integrates with your

web browser and KDP dashboard. Read and understand the TOS before using.

How often should I track?

At a minimum, you should be watching your sales weekly. Daily is strongly recommended, so you have instant knowledge about whether a promotion you booked is working, whether something has gone wrong with your books (i.e. they've disappeared from the retailer site for some reason), or just to give you a general estimate of what your monthly revenue will be. It's far easier to see trends in your sales (some authors sell much better over the weekends, some sell better in the evenings versus daytime) and to know when something is going very right--or very wrong.

You should also be analyzing sales on a monthly and annual basis as well. This helps you make strategic decisions on production and long-term marketing campaigns. If you have one series that is really resonating with readers, you can write more books in that series versus a series that is not selling well. How will you know which book to write, if you aren't tracking sales?

Tracking also allows you to make adjustments. If your books aren't doing as well as you'd like, you can change book covers, or try a different book blurb, or switch up your categories to see if sales improve. You shouldn't change factors daily trying to improve sales, but with a few days or a week of information to go off of, you can begin to see trends and adjust to maximize sales.

Tracking Checklist

- Create a tracking spreadsheet for your books, or register for a service that will track your sales.
- Pencil in a daily, weekly, and monthly time to your calendar for tracking your sales. Make note of any trends or areas that need adjustment.

YOU CAN DOWNLOAD a complete SMART Indie Publishing Checklist here: <http://www.lacywilliams.net/indie-resources>

WHAT DO I DO NOW?

Hopefully, you've completed the checklists at the end of each chapter and have a plan for publishing your book. If you'd like to download a complete checklist that you can print and use for each book you publish, visit www.lacy-williams.net/indie-resources.

While there are different aspects and moving parts to being an indie author, the tools and checklists in this book can give you a great start to get published now.

So, what are you waiting for?

